

Hiram Powers.

This justly celebrated American sculptor died recently in Florence, Italy, at the age of sixty-eight years. His first attempt to earn a living was as a waiter in a hotel. Becoming weary of that line of business, he tried various other pursuits, and at length engaged himself to a Prussian sculptor in Cincinnati. His progress from aid to principal must have been easy and rapid, for in a short time he had modelled certain busts and medallions of his own, which possessed marked merit and secured him the friendship and substantial patronage of the late Nicholas Longworth. The works secured him a high reputation in Washington, whence, after a comparatively brief residence, he was enabled by Mr. Longworth's assistance to go to Florence in 1837, when he was thirty-two years old. During his first year in that city he applied himself with the most intense devotion to acquiring a knowledge of the highest principles and severest methods of the art he had chosen. In 1838 he produced his figure of "Eve," of which the Florentine critics said that it "promised great things."

Mr. Powers justified his opinions, for in 1839 he had completed the "Greek Slave." It was the best known piece of sculpture in the London Exposition of 1851, and the fact that its reputation has increased since that date may be justly accepted as evidence of its intrinsic merits. For several years he received orders so large in number that he was not only not possible for him to execute them, but he could not have effectively superintended their execution by others. For the orders he accepted, however, he received when they were executed probably the highest prices that were ever paid to any sculptor. Among his later works was the life-size figure of Calhoun, and a bust of that statesman; busts of Jackson, Webster, J. Q. Adams, and Marshall, and an ideal study of "Proserpine."

Hiram Powers' reputation came swiftly when it did come, and will be brilliant and enduring. He was an American of whom his countrymen will be always proud.

The Tuolumne Canon.

A new and greater Yosemite than that heretofore known to the world has been discovered. It was penetrated late last fall by Galen Clark, State guardian of the great valley, and John Muir, an enthusiastic and devoted geologist, botanist, and mountain explorer. It is situated in the Tuolumne river canon, seventeen miles north of the Yosemite. The main Tuolumne river, which is a much wider stream than the Merced, runs through the great Tuolumne canon. This canon and its connections have an unbroken length of forty miles. For twenty miles of this distance the canon is shut in by vertical walls of granite, some of which are from two to five hundred feet higher than the two highest in the Yosemite valley. The Tuolumne canon, or Yosemite, at its widest part, is only a quarter of a mile wide, while the Merced Yosemite valley is from half a mile to a mile and a quarter wide. The falls in the latter surpass those of the Tuolumne canon in unbroken volumes of falling water; but in endless variety of cascades and water-shoots the Tuolumne canon is much the grandest. There is one water-leap 1000 feet high in the latter. One of its waterfalls spreads out at first like a great fan of silvery-threaded water; but after a descent in this shape of about 200 feet it is whirled over, closed up, changed in color, and shot down a narrow groove worn in the rocks like an arrow of steam. There is a greater display and variety of water-hues, tints, motions, and expressions in the Tuolumne canon than in the Yosemite.

Ladies in the Patent Office.

It is reported from Washington that a large number of promotions, based on competitive examinations under the civil service rules, were made in the Patent Office, to grades of first, second and third assistant examiners. Miss Anna R. S. Nichols, of Massachusetts, who is the first lady that has ever received such an appointment. Four ladies creditably passed the examination, which was strictly of a scientific nature, each standing above the minimum. The Commissioners had given notice, however, that only one lady would be appointed to try the novel experiment, and Miss Nichols, standing highest of the four, received the promotion. The specialty to which she will be assigned is not determined.

Lace curtains should never be ironed—nor even the embroidered muslin ones. Have two narrow, slender boards, as long or longer, than your curtains. Tack strips of cloth, or wide tape, the entire length of these. Place them out doors upon chairs, as you would quilting frames, and carefully pin the wet curtain between—stretching it until it is entirely smooth. Every point, every scallop should be pulled in shape and fastened down. It takes but a little time for it to dry, and then its place should be filled with another. Housekeepers often stretch a sheet on the carpet of some unused room, and then pin the curtain to the floor, but the above method is greatly preferable.

It often becomes desirable to insert screws in plaster walls, without attaching them to any woodwork, but when we turn them in the plaster they give way, and our effort is vain. And yet a screw may be inserted in plaster so as to hold light pictures, etc., very firmly. The best plan is to enlarge the hole to about twice the diameter of the screw, fill it with plaster of paris, such as is used for fastening the tops of lamps, etc., and bed the screw in the soft plaster. When the plaster has set, the screw will be held very strongly.

The First Star Spangled Banner.

Miss Sarah Smith Stafford, of Trenton, has now in her possession the first Star Spangled Banner ever made. Old, faded and torn, it is still in a good state of preservation, differing from those of the present day only in having twelve instead of thirteen stars upon the blue field.

It was made by the ladies of the old Swedish church, of Philadelphia, assisted by John Brown, Esq., Secretary of the United States Marine Committee. The presentation of the flag was made to John Paul Jones by Misses Mary and Sarah Austin, the latter of whom afterwards became the wife of Commodore Barry.

Paul Jones hoisted it on the Bon Homme Richard, and on the 23d of September, 1779, the engagement took place between her and the Serapis and Countess of Scarborough. During the fight—one of the severest ever known—when the Bon Homme Richard and Serapis were lashed together, the flag was cut down by a British officer. James B. Stafford, (the father of Miss Stafford) caught it up and nailed it to the mast.

A writer in the London Garden strongly recommends root pruning for over-luxuriant trees which do not bear. He says: "In numerous cases I have seen an abundant crop of fine fruit produced by pears and plums the very season after this root pruning had been performed, upon trees from which nothing had been gathered for years previous." The work must be done, of course, before the trees start in spring.

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